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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Report of the Secretary-General

INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 48/184 of 21 December 1993, entitled "International cooperation for the eradication of poverty in developing countries". In that resolution, the Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General "to urge the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, in the framework of the help they give to developing countries, to strengthen their institutional capacities for implementing their poverty eradication programmes and to adopt a coordinated and integrated approach that includes, inter alia, the role and needs of women, with attention to social services, income generation and the increased participation of local communities".

2. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit an updated report at its forty-ninth session focusing, inter alia, on the development of appropriate inputs to country programmes by relevant agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, based on exchange of information on and analysis of the operations of actual programmes and the identification of constraints and weaknesses of operational and coordinating capacities owing to a lack of resources, as well as focusing on elements for the elaboration of multisectoral strategies.

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3. The submission of the present report was deferred to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly as the organizations of the system were, until this year, actively engaged in the preparations for the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the Summit was expected to have a substantial impact on the orientations and priorities of their programmes.

4. This report has been prepared in consultation with and on the basis of information provided by the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system. The information on programming and coordination issues at the country level has been gathered from a few resident coordinators and the field missions carried out in preparation for the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities, as well as from the work undertaken by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) on poverty eradication.

5. It is useful to bear in mind that the issues addressed in this report are closely related to a number of other issues that will be considered by the General Assembly in the context of the International Year for Poverty Eradication, follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, the coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and the comprehensive policy review of operational activities. This report should, therefore, be seen together with the reports submitted under the agenda items concerned with those subjects.

I. POVERTY ERADICATION AS A COMMON THEME OF MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

6. Poverty eradication has figured prominently as a priority objective of all the major United Nations conferences convened over the past five years. The report of the Secretary-General on the coordinated follow-up to major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields, submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1995, identified poverty eradication as one of 12 common themes emerging from these conferences (see E/1995/86, para. 57 and table 1). For the purposes of the present report, however, the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) and the Fourth World Conference on Women have particular relevance as these have direct bearing on the activities of the United Nations system at the country level. In the following paragraphs, the main highlights of UNCED, ICPD and the Fourth World Conference on Women are summarized. Since the World Summit for Social Development addressed poverty eradication comprehensively as one of its three major themes, the outcome of WSSD is dealt with separately in the next section.

Agenda 21

7. At UNCED, the international community recognized that combating poverty was an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. 1/ It underscored that the problems of poverty, development and sustainable resource management were to be tackled simultaneously. This was translated into the long-term

objective set by Agenda 21 to enable all people to achieve sustainable livelihoods. 2/

8. To achieve this objective it was necessary to give greater priority to policies promoting integrated human resource development. Agenda 21 called for cross-cutting measures in the areas of basic education, primary and maternal health care, and the advancement of women, but also for increased access to resources in the context of sustainable development, with a special focus on the urban poor, women, children and rural areas. Measures to ensure that women and men are enabled and have the same right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children are also called for under the objective of poverty eradication.

9. Agenda 21 aimed at promoting a community-driven approach to poverty reduction and sustainability. It therefore called for measures to enable local and community groups to contribute to alleviating poverty and developing sustainability. 3/

10. Poverty-stricken areas were to be targeted by integrated strategies and programmes in the areas of poverty eradication and alleviation, employment and income mobilization, resource mobilization and the environment.

11. Country-specific programmes directed at eradicating poverty, international efforts supporting national efforts and creating a supportive international environment were all crucial for eradicating poverty. UNCED called for cooperation by all States and all people in eradicating poverty. 4/ The United Nations system was invited to make poverty eradication a major priority. This included, inter alia, assisting Governments in the formulation and implementation of national action plans on poverty alleviation and sustainable development, strengthening coordination of actions relating to poverty eradication 5/ and ensuring that the international economic framework and policies of international organizations addressed social and environmental concerns. 6/

International Conference on Population and Development

12. ICPD marked the recognition that persistent and widespread poverty influences and is influenced by demographic parameters. It highlighted the complementarity and the positive synergies that exist between efforts to reduce poverty and strategies to slow down population growth, achieve economic progress, improve environmental protection and reduce unsustainable consumption and production patterns. 7/ Strategies for sustainable development, population strategies and efforts to reduce poverty are thus to be designed and conducted in an integrated manner.

13. As did UNCED, ICPD reaffirmed the objective of poverty eradication as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. 8/ It also clearly reaffirmed that poverty was irreconcilable with the concept of development, as the rights and aspirations of women and men were at the centre of development. Also as did UNCED, ICPD called for the right to development to be fulfilled. 9/ But ICPD also affirmed the right of human beings to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families. 10/

14. ICPD called for priority to be given to investments in human resource development, with a special focus on underserved members of society. Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women was a prerequisite to poverty eradication, as well as to environmental protection and conservation, sustained economic growth and population goals. Actions to strengthen food security at all levels and to facilitate the creation of environmentally sound and productive jobs also pertained to poverty eradication.

15. ICPD, as did UNCED, called for the cooperation of all States and all people in poverty eradication. It drew attention to the importance of a supportive international economic environment, to the special needs of developing countries in the area of poverty eradication, and to the situation of countries with economies in transition. 11/ Governments were urged to devote an increased proportion of public sector expenditure and official development assistance to the social sector and, in particular, poverty eradication. 12/

Fourth World Conference on Women

16. The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women was one of the critical areas of concern identified in the draft platform for action of the Fourth World Conference on Women as requiring strategic action by Governments and the international community. 13/

17. The World Conference highlighted the fact that while women bore a disproportionate burden of poverty, macroeconomic and social policies failed to reach them due to a too-exclusive focus on the formal sector and the failure of those policies to consider the differential impact on men and women. It was emphasized that empowering women was a critical factor in the eradication of poverty, as women contributed to the economy and to eradicating poverty through both their remunerated and unremunerated work.

18. The Conference called for action by Governments to review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women to overcome poverty within the framework of sustainable development. 14/ This included analysing from a gender perspective all policies and programmes, and action by multilateral financial institutions and development institutions to assess and minimize the negative social and gender-specific effects of macroeconomic policies.

19. Action to recognize women's rights to economic resources and to ensure women's access to economic resources was also called for. This included revision of laws and administrative practices found to restrict women's rights. The Conference also called for action to provide women with access to savings mechanisms and institutions and to credit, and for research on methodologies and statistical data to integrate a gender perspective into all policies and programmes and to enable women to overcome poverty.

II. WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AS THE FRAMEWORK FOR INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

20. Coordination and cooperation by the organizations of the United Nations system in the eradication of poverty has been the subject of previous reports as well as of intergovernmental discussions. Most recently, in 1992 the Economic and Social Council devoted its coordination segment to this issue on the basis of a report by the Secretary-General (E/1992/47). The report put forward a broad and positive concept of coordination that would result in a coherent continuum of activities to achieve a common purpose. Indeed, it noted that effective collaboration could exist only when there were common purposes which in turn must be the product of consultations and agreement among the organizations of the system on major priorities and the responses to them. This would require as a sine qua non the setting of political priorities for the system by the central intergovernmental bodies. The United Nations system would then use the overall strategies and approaches thus developed as a framework and operational guide in developing harmonized plans and programmes as well as a joint evaluation of their results and impact.

21. The required common purpose and the requisite commitment by the international community at the highest political level to the eradication of poverty has evolved from recent major United Nations conferences including UNCED, ICPD, the Fourth World Conference on Women and, in particular, the World Summit for Social Development, which addressed poverty as one of its three major themes. More specifically, the national and international approaches and strategies have been described in the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Summit for Social Development. The outcome of the Summit thus provides a coherent framework for system-wide action in this area. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action reflect an international consensus on the principles and goals, the commitments undertaken and the actions required to eradicate poverty and provide the benchmarks against which system-wide activities can be developed and assessed. Poverty eradication has clearly emerged from the Summit as a key development priority.

22. At the Summit, heads of State and Government committed themselves to "an improved and strengthened framework for international, regional and subregional cooperation for social development, in a spirit of partnership, through the United Nations and other multilateral institutions". They accordingly agreed to enlist the support and cooperation of the United Nations system, international development agencies and multilateral development banks "to take appropriate and coordinated measures for continuous and sustained progress in attaining the goals and commitments agreed to by the Summit. The United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions should establish regular and substantive dialogue, including at the field level, for more effective and efficient coordination of assistance for social development". Governments also decided to "adopt the appropriate measures and mechanisms for implementing and monitoring the outcome of the [Summit], with the assistance, upon request, of the specialized agencies, programmes and regional commissions of the United Nations system, with broad participation of all sectors of civil society". 15/

23. Strong emphasis is placed in the Copenhagen Programme of Action on the formulation of integrated strategies to eradicate poverty. These strategies

should be based on promoting sustained economic growth, in the context of sustainable development, and social progress, requiring that growth be broadly based and offering equal opportunities to all peoples. In the context of national plans, the Programme of Action stresses the need to give particular attention to employment creation as a means of eradicating poverty, giving appropriate consideration to health and education, assigning a higher priority to basic social services, generating household income and promoting access to productive assets and economic opportunities. Governments are urged to integrate goals and targets for combating poverty into overall economic and social policies and planning at the local, national and, where appropriate, regional levels. The Programme of Action further calls for the empowerment of people living in poverty and their organizations by involving them fully in the setting of targets and in the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of national strategies and programmes for poverty eradication and by integrating gender concerns into the planning and implementation of policies and programmes.

24. The Copenhagen Programme of Action sets among the requirements specified for the promotion of an integrated approach at the national level the formulation or strengthening, by 1996, of comprehensive cross-sectoral strategies for implementing the outcome of the Summit and national strategies for social development, including government action, action taken by States in cooperation with other Governments, international, regional and subregional organizations, and action taken in partnership and cooperation with actors of civil society and the private sector, with specific responsibilities to be undertaken by each actor and with agreed priorities and time-frames.

25. Each country is requested to develop a precise definition and assessment of absolute poverty, preferably by 1996, at which time the General Assembly will review the effectiveness of the steps taken to implement the outcome of the Summit with regard to poverty eradication as part of the activities relating to the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (further information on the International Year will be provided in a separate report). The Copenhagen Programme of Action also recommends that the General Assembly, at its fiftieth session, should declare the first United Nations decade for the eradication of poverty following the conclusion of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty in 1996, with a view to considering further initiatives in this area.

III. AN OVERVIEW OF POLICIES, MULTISECTORAL STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMMES RELATING TO POVERTY

A. Typology of activities of the United Nations system for the eradication of poverty

26. Given the complexity of the issue of poverty and the wide range of related activities undertaken by the organizations of the system, it may be useful to group these activities according to the goals that each activity is designed to achieve. Indeed, such an effort has been made recently by CCPOQ 16/ to facilitate its review of the policies and programmes of the system relating to poverty eradication.

27. CCPOQ classifies the work of organizations of the United Nations system into the following categories:

(a) Analytical work focusing on the problem of definition and determinants of poverty, the methodology for the assessment of poverty and the development of corresponding indicators. A subject of particular interest over the past decade has been the impact on poverty of stabilization, structural adjustment and economic and social reform programmes adopted by a large number of countries with the advice and assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The result of this research has had an important influence on the design and content of more recent adjustment programmes;

(b) Income-generating activities seeking to increase the incomes of the poor through employment creation and productivity-enhancing measures and focusing on sectors in which the poor are largely concentrated;

(c) Labour-intensive public works. The labour-intensive approach to the production of assets, goods and other services involves the use of working methods and systems that optimize labour content, usually through a cost-effective combination of labour and the use of light equipment;

(d) Access to basic services. Many agencies of the United Nations system are involved in activities to develop or strengthen the access of the poor to basic services including low-cost safe water supplies, sanitation and hygiene, primary health-care facilities and basic education;

(e) Social funds and safety nets. Several United Nations agencies are increasingly involved in providing funds or technical assistance to establish various forms of social funds and safety nets to protect vulnerable groups;

(f) Participation of the poor. There is an increasing tendency to introduce a participatory approach in the programmes and projects of several agencies. Participation is regarded by some agencies as desirable in its own right linked to the empowerment of the poor; other agencies view participation as a means to promote economic efficiency and the sustainability of anti-poverty projects;

(g) Anti-discrimination activities. Agencies help to reduce discrimination in various ways, including the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on discriminatory practices; the establishment of international standards; the improvement of conditions in the labour market and the prevention of child labour;

(h) Monitoring poverty changes. A number of agencies are involved in either the measurement of, or reporting on poverty, and a few are directly involved in poverty-related data collection. At the inter-agency level, measurement of poverty is undertaken by a task force of the United Nations Statistical Commission. The ACC Subcommittee on Rural Development has been examining various aspects of poverty alleviation strategies.

B. The policies of the United Nations system and multisectoral strategies

28. Within the framework of the global consensus reflected at the World Summit for Social Development, most organizations have articulated broad policies and multisectoral strategies which provide the basis for developing specific anti-poverty programmes. CCPOQ notes, 17/ in this context, that the view is now widespread among the organizations of the United Nations system that the best way of alleviating poverty is to implement successfully a development strategy that pursues sustained economic growth with equity. More equitable growth almost invariably implies more employment-intensive patterns of growth which increase the demand for labour, the major asset of the poor and are more equitable. The employment-generating capacity of growth can be enhanced by investing in the more labour-intensive sectors of the economy (in particular agriculture) by increasing investments in human capital (basic education, primary health care, nutrition and population programmes) and by reducing or removing distortions in relative factor prices that arise from a malfunctioning of the labour market or of the market for credit. The sustainability of development is a dimension that has acquired increased importance in this regard. Following is a brief overview of such policies and strategies.

29. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) considers that the delivery of basic social services is one of the most effective and cost-efficient ways to combat the worst manifestations of poverty. It therefore focuses the bulk of its operational support and resources on the provision of basic social services for the survival, protection and development of children and women. In the context of the 20/20 initiative, as reflected in the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, basic social services are taken to comprise basic education, primary health care and family planning services, low-cost water and sanitation services and nutrition programmes. UNICEF pays special attention to children in especially difficult circumstances, particularly street children and child labour

30. UNICEF has espoused the concept of "adjustment with a human face" - encouraging the redesign of adjustment programmes to allow the poor to participate more effectively in the process of economic and social development and to ensure their protection during periods of economic stagnation and fiscal austerity. Of particular importance has been its insistence that the debate needed to shift from an excessive focus on the macro policy framework to the meso level - the policy instruments that govern the allocation of resources within a given macroeconomic policy framework. These instruments include public expenditure allocation, aid utilization, credit allocation, income and pricing policy, taxation, etc. UNICEF will continue its collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other agencies to conduct public finance analysis in order to encourage greater allocation of resources for basic social services.

31. UNICEF's experience in the area of poverty eradication has drawn it into special areas of programme support. The feminization of poverty and especially the preponderance and rapid increase of female-headed households constitutes one of the primary areas of concern for UNICEF's work in both rural and urban areas. Programme interventions targeted at this group, albeit predominantly curative in

character, have proved particularly effective in mitigating the worst effects of poverty. Preventive and more self-sustaining programmes include those aimed at the girl child. UNICEF works with Governments and communities to help equip girls through early health and education interventions. On the broader societal level UNICEF works towards promoting the elimination of gender biases in families and social programmes. The work of UNICEF is guided by the outcome of the World Summit for Children, at which Governments agreed to achieve, by the year 2000, a one-third reduction of the infant and under-five mortality rate, a halving of maternal mortality and malnutrition rates, a halving of the adult illiteracy rate, universal access to clean drinking water and safe sanitation, universal access to basic education and the improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances.

32. At the country level, UNICEF contributes to the analysis of poverty through the preparation of the situation analysis of children and women. In addition, the national programmes of action for the survival, protection and development of children in the 1990s take a broader focus on the poverty problem and provide the programmatic and institutional framework for achieving national goals. UNICEF works to ensure consistency between the situation analysis, the national programmes of action and the country strategy note.

33. The mandate of the World Food Programme (WFP) is to seek hunger and poverty alleviation. Its assistance programmes are designed and implemented on the basis of broad-based participation, with a particular focus on women and their children. It has developed project guidelines which specify the nature and type of collaboration with other actors in the United Nations system for the preparation and implementation of its projects. WFP has begun the process of preparing country strategy outlines (CSOs) for the assessment of the comparative advantage of using its resources for poverty eradication. CSO preparation involves an assessment of the poverty and food insecurity problem, understanding the policies and strategies of the national Governments in addressing these issues, and examining the relative roles of other agencies, donors and NGOs in poverty eradication and food insecurity reduction. CSOs examine the role and needs of women, the provision of social services, opportunities for assisting income generation and scope for community participation. Sectoral aspects such as the feminization of poverty, rural poverty and urban poverty are part of this examination.

34. WFP's General Regulations are being revised to enable it to adopt a programme approach based on country-specific strategies. Country programmes (CPs), which would be based on CSOs, would be in line with the requirements of General Assembly resolution 47/199. WFP considers that the advantages include increased operational flexibility and a higher degree of predictability for recipient Governments. These in turn portend better allocation mechanisms, and hence more effective use of resources rather than for gap filling. The flexibility, in particular, could be put to use not only in responding to unforeseen needs for intraprogramme changes, but also in responding to demands from multi-agency coordination and integration efforts. The guidelines for CSO/CP preparation include provisions to ensure that they are linked to the country strategy note.

35. UNFPA contributes towards the eradication of poverty through the promotion and implementation of population and sustainable development programmes. UNFPA-supported activities have been primarily oriented towards less developed countries and to low-income groups both in rural and urban areas, with emphasis on women of reproductive age. In this regard, all UNFPA-supported programmes are ultimately addressed to the poor and conceived to foster social and economic development which lead to poverty eradication. Its approach to social development includes the provision of social services (education, health, family planning), employment generation and community involvement in development efforts. UNFPA country programmes place a heavy emphasis on gender equality and equity in formulating, implementing and evaluating all population programmes. Priority is assigned to the integration of population inputs into broader development policy frameworks such as the country strategy notes, rolling development plans, structural adjustment programmes and sectoral policy frameworks. These include the empowerment of women - the participation of women in all development activities at all levels, from health and literacy programmes to income generation and job creation.

36. The fundamental objective of the World Bank is to assist countries to reduce poverty and raise living standards. The poverty reduction strategy that the Bank encourages countries to follow is multidimensional, encompassing broad-based, labour-demanding economic growth, human resource development and provision of safety nets for the poor and vulnerable. It defines its assistance to a country through the country assistance strategy (CAS). The findings of country-specific poverty analysis, public expenditure reviews and other economic and sector studies form the main input to the CAS; thus, the CAS is an important instrument for tailoring the Bank's assistance - whether policy advice, technical assistance, project lending or loans in support of policy reforms - to the specific circumstances of each country. The Bank uses household survey data in undertaking detailed poverty analyses. Increasingly, the Bank is adopting a participatory approach to poverty analysis; it involves the poor themselves in the identification of their problems and needs and also in the actual design and implementation of projects.

37. IMF policy advice has increasingly emphasized the social dimension of adjustment and has paid greater attention to social issues in the context of surveillance and members' economic policies, financial support to member countries implementing adjustment programmes and technical assistance. It stresses the importance of a high-quality growth strategy, which implies: pursuing economic policies that foster macroeconomic stability; implementing structural policies designed to allow market forces to allocate resources and create an enabling environment for private sector activity; implementing sound social policies, including social safety nets to protect the poor and vulnerable groups during the adjustment period; and strengthening economic governance. In this context, the Fund's policy advice emphasizes macroeconomic implications, cost-effectiveness and the financial viability of social policy choices.

38. IMF indicates that it is continuously seeking to improve its policy advice and programme design based on past experience. It will continue its advice on sound macroeconomic policies aimed at high-quality growth - growth which fosters employment, poverty reduction and greater equity - and, in so doing, it will strengthen its attention to social issues. It considers that there is a need to

help Governments analyse the existing inequalities, in particular unequal access to education, health and economic resources such as credit and land. Second, there is a need to help Governments improve the equity content of public expenditure by reducing unproductive expenditures, including military spending, and by increasing the level and quality of expenditures on primary health, education and rural infrastructure. It is important for budgetary policies to be consistent with the Government's stated social goals, to be transparent and to be supported by donor aid policies. Moreover, Governments should be helped to address structural weaknesses - including lack of financial institutions - in the rural areas where most of the poor live. Finally, through policy discussions and technical assistance IMF could contribute further to improving Governments' capacity to monitor social developments and pursue transparent social policies.

39. Rural poverty alleviation in the developing world is the sole mandate of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). All its activities - the field projects for adaptive research and institution-building - focus on this single goal. While the primary objective has been to assist smallholders to increase food production and income and to expand the opportunities for the rural landless to engage in income-generating enterprises, attention has also been given to improving the quality of life of the poor. IFAD encourages and supports the active participation of people in all phases of the development process, from project planning to implementation and monitoring and assessment. To facilitate this participation, essential support is provided in the form of credit, extension services and training as well as appropriate technologies, along with ongoing efforts to ensure a policy environment that favours the rural poor.

40. IFAD's special programming missions have been the analytic mechanism for the articulation of the Fund's country policy and investment strategy. The missions are meant to provide clear indications of priority target groups and activities for IFAD project assistance within a long-term development strategy for the country. The missions have involved a thorough review of the nature and impact of policy instruments affecting the production capacity, employment opportunities, income generation and standards of living of the rural poor. To respond to specific requirements for strategic guidance on national strategy and project development, country strategy studies have been developed as a supplementary mechanism. They serve to review the general thrust of IFAD's activities in the country in relation to major bottlenecks in the development of smallholders and the rural poor. They assess the significance of implementation issues for both general strategy and project design and formulate guidelines for IFAD's operations. IFAD's operational strategy targets beneficiaries, focusing on smallholders and poor rural women farmers, with the aim of increasing their agricultural production; landless and marginal farmers, with the aim of increasing their off-farm incomes; and those other rural poor delinked from the development mainstream such as remote, indigenous or culturally isolated people, as well as refugees, so as to integrate them into the development process. The strategy is also aimed at expanding the access of the poor to basic resources and to market opportunities, and at enhancing people's participation and institution-building at the grass-roots, local, regional or national levels. In order to fulfil its mandate, IFAD has had to develop a specific knowledge of rural poverty that goes well beyond the macro-data available on the situation

and involves the systematic collection of micro-data to capture the highly diversified realities of the rural poor.

41. IFAD reports that it has participated, and will continue to participate, in a number of task forces and coordination efforts within the system regarding follow-up to the major international conferences. As a member of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), IFAD took a leading role in establishing a working group on environment and sustainable development, and as Chair for 1995-1996 it will make every effort to work towards inter-agency collaboration on this and other essential issues regarding the contribution of the United Nations to the alleviation of hunger and poverty.

42. The Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development has been the frame of reference of the activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on poverty eradication since 1979. Various services of FAO have been reoriented to better support the efforts of Governments to address the problems of the rural poor and other disadvantaged groups, including the landless, rural women, tenants, non-farm rural workers and pastoralists. Under its programmes FAO collaborates with Governments in undertaking the institutional and structural transformations that would facilitate easy access of the rural poor to natural resources and to production inputs such as credit, and to reinforce their productive capacity through training and cooperative action. The revised FAO Plan of Action for Integration of Women in Development (1996-2001) and the FAO Plan of Action for People's Participation in Rural Development provide the institutional frameworks and mechanisms for promoting and facilitating efforts to overcome constraints and to increase the involvement of rural women and men as contributors and beneficiaries of economic, social and political development. With specific reference to women, FAO strives towards promoting gender-based equity in the access to and control of productive resources (land, labour, capital and technology) and services (extension, credit, marketing, etc.); in enhancing the participation of women in decision- and policy-making processes at all levels; and in promoting actions to reduce the workloads of women and enhancing their opportunities for income-generating activities and remunerated employment.

43. At the country level FAO has collaborated with the agencies of the United Nations system in fielding inter-agency policy advice missions to over 30 countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America to advise on the adoption of national policies and strategies to ensure sustainable poverty eradication through growth with equity and people's participation.

44. The International Labour Organization (ILO) considers that the creation of productive employment is the most effective approach to poverty eradication and should be the main theme underlying an integrated approach to development including, inter alia, the role and needs of women, the provision of social services, income generation and the increased participation of local communities. Its activities in the area of poverty eradication place considerable emphasis on the unorganized sectors, women and vulnerable groups, and the participatory approach. In order to increase its effectiveness in providing assistance to its constituents and to ensure that this assistance responds to real needs in a timely fashion, ILO has in recent years considerably

strengthened its field structure by creating multidisciplinary advisory teams in various developing regions. The ILO area offices, with the assistance of these teams, prepare country objective statements following extensive consultation with Government, employers' and workers' organizations, United Nations agencies and donors. These multidisciplinary teams have specialists on employment and income generation and several of them include specialists on women in development to ensure that this dimension is fully reflected in all ILO activities at the country level.

45. The World Health Organization (WHO) considers that poverty is the world's leading cause of illness and death. All of its work in international health, particularly its technical cooperation with countries, aims at overcoming the root causes of poverty and ill-health. WHO has established a Global Task Force on Health and Development which analyses the evolution of health determinants, especially those which are poverty related, identifying relevant health strategies and advocating for change. It is actively promoting the development of national health and service monitoring and evaluation, including health indicator development. As countries have endorsed and are implementing the Health for All strategy through primary health care, the importance of monitoring and evaluating its implementation has been brought to the forefront. As part of WHO's efforts to implement the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition, it has intensified its technical cooperation with countries by assisting them in developing and implementing national plans of action for nutrition.

46. Operationally, most WHO programmes for technical cooperation with developing countries have focused on expansion of coverage and access to essential health services and health promotion, especially those meeting the needs of women and children. Control of communicable diseases, ensurance of proper nutrition and provision of safe water supply are key programmes that will promote health and contribute to the eradication of poverty. A special initiative of Intensified Cooperation with Countries and Peoples in Greatest Need, launched by WHO a few years ago, aims to enable poor countries to establish equitable and sustainable health systems tailored to their specific needs. Following situation assessments, plans of action are developed and additional resources mobilized through better use of local resources and improved aid management. The UNDP Round Table or the World Bank Consultative Group processes have been extensively used to achieve better aid coordination in this regard.

47. Follow-up by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to the World Summit for Social Development, especially under commitment 6, will continue to place emphasis on meeting the goals and objectives of the Education for All programme as an integral approach to eradicating illiteracy - one of the root causes as well as an effect of poverty. The aim of this strategy is to close the gap between literate and illiterate populations and to devise sustainable educational development that responds to present societal, individual and collective life-long needs as well as to the needs of future generations, with emphasis being placed on girls and women, particularly in rural areas. A number of ongoing activities are geared to improving the policy knowledge based on the nature, causes and consequences of poverty. At the global level, comparative studies sponsored under UNESCO's

Management of Social Transformations Programme will examine the differential effects of the accelerating process of globalization, especially the social impact of economic restructuring on employment equity within and among countries with special focus on providing a better understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty in cities.

48. In accordance with the need expressed in the Copenhagen Programme of Action, UNESCO will support Governments, inter alia, in carrying out country-specific studies on causes and consequences of poverty, on the impact of structural adjustment on the poor, and on the effectiveness of anti-poverty strategies. UNESCO will also facilitate the sharing of experience on innovative actions, with special focus on the role and needs of women in combating poverty, related to how communities set their development priorities, allocate resources, and establish partnerships between individuals, communities and Government in addressing pressing social problems. With reference to specific country programmes, UNESCO's cooperation with UNDP within the framework of the Technical Support Services (TSS-1) mechanism has progressively addressed the question of poverty eradication.

49. Three out of seven priority themes identified by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) for the 1996-1997 biennium directly focus on poverty in industrial development: small and medium enterprises, rural industrial development and the linkage between industry and agriculture, with a focus on Africa and the least developed countries (LDCs). It considers that once the role of specific agencies is delineated in the country strategy note, inter-agency support programmes could be launched, based on agreed situation analyses around specific themes, such as in the case of food security which offers great potential for FAO and UNIDO to work together.

50. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) indicates that its development arm, the Telecommunication Development Bureau, could be involved with other players in the United Nations system on poverty eradication through integrated rural development in developing countries, which is another top priority programme for the LDCs in the Buenos Aires Action Plan for Global Telecommunication Development. Its integrated rural development programme includes gender issues and addresses vulnerable groups, such as children and the elderly. ITU also addresses urban poverty by focusing on the provision of transport and telecommunication facilities.

51. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is concerned with the effect of international economic relations on poverty. Its preliminary research indicates that dualism and marginalization within developing countries can be expected to grow as a result of the greater emphasis on market forces, but the widening of the income gap between the poor and the non-poor could be tempered in countries which exploit their comparative advantage in low-cost labour. There could also occur intertemporal effects: initially medium-term negative effects on poor and vulnerable groups, followed possibly by generally beneficial results. The negative effects could be especially marked for countries which liberalize their economies and expose themselves to globalizing influences before they have achieved basic improvements in their fiscal and balance-of-payments positions.

52. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) considers that poverty eradication and environmental sustainability both have social roots and are interdependent. It works to counteract forces - rapid population growth and prevailing poverty - that increase pressure on environmental resources, often forcing communities into unsustainable practices for the simple purpose of obtaining the food, fuel and shelter needed for daily survival. UNEP feels that its comparative strengths exist in: (i) scientific analysis of the development-environment nexus and dissemination of information on the state of the environment; (ii) analysis, elaboration and provision of policy tools for environmental management, as an integral component of development planning; and (iii) promotion of public awareness and mobilization of environmental actions, including empowering women and enhanced participation of non-governmental organizations and a wide range of industry sectors.

53. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) is concerned with urban poverty, recognizing that any meaningful solution to this problem must be based on increased community participation. As women constitute between 70 and 90 per cent of the active residents in any low-income community, efforts are aimed at strengthening their participation at all levels of the community development process. Habitat also undertakes activities, in collaboration with other organizations of the United Nations system, to create employment opportunities in the non-formal sector and empower the poor and disadvantaged.

54. The programme of work of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in the field of poverty eradication is under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Poverty Alleviation through Economic Growth and Social Development, one of the three thematic committees subsidiary to the Commission. The Commission had convened in 1994 a regional conference in preparation for the World Summit for Social Development; the Manila Declaration on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP region which emerged provided the regional policy perspective for the Copenhagen Programme of Action. In facilitating the implementation of the regional Agenda, work is under way to assist Governments in preparing guidelines for developing national programmes of action and setting up indicators and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the progress made. The regional Inter-Agency Task Force on the Agenda for Action on Social Development collaborated in the formulation of the Agenda and will continue to ensure coordinated action towards its implementation.

55. ESCAP is undertaking, in collaboration with other organizations of the United Nations system, activities relating to the participation of the poor, promoting increased awareness of the linkages between poverty and high population growth rates, changing family structures, the role and status of women, rural poverty and rural-urban migration. Work is under way in the area of poverty measurement through coordination with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), United Nations Headquarters and the United Nations Statistical Commission, and in developing on-line information. The Commission has recommended the establishment of an interorganizational subcommittee on population and development and an inter-agency subcommittee on poverty alleviation to promote a coherent regional approach for the United Nations system.

56. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) considers that the regional commissions are well placed to exploit in an integrated and coordinated manner the inherent synergy in the linkages among the sectors that contribute to the eradication of poverty given the region-specific conditions of poverty. It has developed a number of critical activities around the nexus of interrelationships between food supply, population dynamics and environmental and human settlements concerns. Its also focuses attention on the feminization of poverty as well as on urban and rural poverty. Overall direction is provided by the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning; the subsidiary organs review progress in the implementation of regionally agreed and internationally supported strategies or plans of action and programmes which address poverty eradication directly. These have proven useful in concerting the support of agencies of the United Nations system. ECA considers that coordination at the regional level can be further improved through the system of medium-term planning and the biennial programme budget exercises, as well as by greater use of system-wide plans and inter-agency task forces and working groups, which can be given added practical expression in coordinated follow-up to global conferences.

57. The declining growth of gross domestic product (GDP) and slow recovery rates in most member States of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), accompanied by rising unemployment rates and cutbacks in social expenditures, have resulted in the appearance or growth of relative poverty, particularly in countries in transition. The feminization of poverty is a concern in this region. Coherent national gender-sensitive policies need to be devised, possibly in the form of national reports based on statistical data or national assessments. ECE is undertaking statistical work relating to the distribution of income and the consumption and accumulation of households, which encompasses poverty statistics. It notes that the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action state that the regional commissions, in cooperation with regional intergovernmental organizations and banks, could convene on a biennial basis a meeting at a high political level to evaluate progress made in follow-up to the Summit, exchange views and adopt appropriate measures. ECE suggests that, in this regard, a set of guiding principles and methodologies for monitoring should be established, including poverty indicators and indices, reported by the Inter-agency Task Force on the measurement of poverty, established by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 1994. Finally, the regional meetings planned for 1997 to follow up the World Summit for Social Development could also determine and provide inputs for poverty eradication.

58. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) has undertaken research in recent years for the enhancement of social integration, focusing primarily on the preparations for the World Summit for Social Development. While this research did not take poverty eradication as a central theme, it did indicate that national social policy, however well intentioned, was everywhere at risk. The rapidity and depth of technological and social change, encouraged by global market forces, make it increasingly difficult for nations adequately to protect vulnerable and marginalized groups. UNRISD is also carrying out a project to strengthen national capacity to undertake gender analysis and to integrate gender into mainstream development policy. In addition, it is pursuing studies on crisis, adjustment and social change which

examine individual and collective coping strategies and the dynamics of social change at the sectoral and macro levels.

59. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) undertakes research and training on issues relevant to the advancement of women, addressing poverty eradication among women in developing countries. It considers that the general framework of research strategies or policy and programme designs require reliable and timely statistical data which, in the case of women in particular, are lacking. INSTRAW is currently collaborating with several organizations of the United Nations system in addressing the gap in information with regard to women's actual and potential contributions to economic development. It focuses its efforts with respect to women living in poverty on access to water, sanitation and energy, the migration of women and access to financial resources, including credit.

60. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) addresses poverty eradication among Palestinian refugees by enhancing their skills for raising income, facilitating finance access for micro and small business development, developing individual and group income-generating projects, and training in starting businesses and transfer of skills, technology and information on alternative approaches and strategies of poverty alleviation for the promotion and development of sustainable and community-managed programmes and activities. Palestinian refugee women have specifically been targeted under these interventions. Under its Special Hardship Assistance Programme, UNRWA provides direct relief to approximately 180,000 persons, the most needy and the poorest. In addition to basic food rations, families also receive cash assistance in emergencies and financial support for the repair and reconstruction of their shelters based on individual family needs and the availability of financial resources. More than 17 per cent of these families have women as head of household. UNRWA has also developed a database on the socio-economic status of the poorest refugees, aimed at developing more integrated and multisectoral approaches in poverty eradication programmes. UNRWA indicates that its activities are implemented in close coordination with other actors in the United Nations system, as well as with international non-governmental organizations and local voluntary groups.

IV. POVERTY ERADICATION PROGRAMMES AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

61. Seven case studies of the experience gained in developing and implementing poverty-eradication programmes and in coordination at the country level in developing countries are presented below. These have been drawn from the work of CCPOQ referred to above as well as from some field missions carried out over the past year in preparation of the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities to be carried out by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. The examples, drawn as they are from countries at various stages of development and located in different regions of the developing world, give some indication of the scope and range of the poverty-eradication programmes and the coordination efforts undertaken by United Nations agencies in this area. They also help identify the main problems and obstacles in the way of mobilizing a fully effective and well-coordinated response to the challenge of poverty.

A. P4K programme in Indonesia for poverty reduction

62. Indonesia has reduced absolute poverty from 60 per cent in 1960 to 14 per cent in 1994. The United Nations system has made a contribution to this through an income-generating project for marginal farmers and landless people.

63. The project identifies small homogenous groups of 8 to 10 members from households identified as being below the poverty line, defined as per capita income equivalent to the value of 320 kg of rice per year, and provides opportunities to enhance their income-generating capacities through (i) financial intermediation; (ii) the purchase and supply of inputs; and (iii) marketing. Altogether, 3,395 groups involve 350,000 families. In the first phase (1979-1986), with $2.7 million from UNDP and technical support from FAO, an institutional mechanism in agricultural extension and rural credit was established and capital assistance to businesses provided.

64. Based on good initial results, the Government of Indonesia, working with IFAD, UNDP and the Government of the Netherlands, started phase II in 1989, covering 2,684 villages. Capital assistance is given in the form of credit with interest of 22.1 per cent per year, without collateral.

65. A mid-term evaluation in October 1994 revealed that the beneficiary selection process was rigorous enough to target the poor and that of the groups identified, 35 per cent were all female against a target of 20 per cent. Fifty-three per cent of the groups used the loans for the households' main economic activities while 47 per cent used them for sideline activities. The evaluation also showed that the poor seemed to opt, in the beginning, for activities with lowest risk and that they graduated subsequently to more profitable and higher capital-intensive activities. The project has had strong social and community effects through the increased self-confidence of the beneficiaries and their enhanced social standing in the villages. It also increased the volume of production in 82 per cent of the groups and improved the quality of production in 65 per cent. It aided employment agencies by increasing the working hours of group members by 66 per cent. The increased total household income from loan activities was 41 per cent.

B. United Nations Common Agenda for Pakistan

66. There has been close collaboration between the agencies of the United Nations system operating in Pakistan at the policy/strategy level. This is reflected in the United Nations Common Agenda for Pakistan and the draft country strategy note (CSN) where commonly agreed positions have been taken on a set of social and economic issues revolving around poverty eradication. While the move towards joint programming is still in the early stages, some initiatives have been taken to coordinate various parts of the United Nations system in Pakistan around the objective of poverty eradication.

67. A United Nations working group for the World Summit for Social Development was established, which provided a forum where the agencies could coordinate the

different forms of assistance being provided to the country-level preparations. This inter-agency group is also involved in the support of follow-up activities.

68. A series of coordination groups exist both within the United Nations system and in the wider donor community. Subjects covered by such groups include institutional reforms, population, basic education and rural income/employment. These groups meet regularly to exchange information and take collective action on different issues. They have spearheaded several successful initiatives resulting in concrete changes or decisions.

69. Three projects were identified in 1992 as pilots for incorporating Common Agenda themes. This exercise stimulated inter-agency cooperation at the project level and resulted in a more integrated approach to development. By drawing on the respective areas of expertise of a wider group of United Nations agencies, issues of importance to poverty eradication such as income generation, family planning and female literacy, which originally had not been addressed through the projects, could be added to their activities. There are also examples of joint programming in smaller groups. For example, UNDP and UNICEF have jointly prepared and funded programmes in the water and sanitation sector. Through the joint efforts of UNDP and UNICEF community participation and the involvement of women were integrated within the ongoing projects.

70. The United Nations agencies collaborated to provide assistance to the Government of Pakistan in the design and implementation of the social action plan (SAP). An Institutional Development Task Force was established to identify sectoral problems and constraints inhibiting the realization of the desired level of social sector targets and objectives. National-level seminars focusing on identifying bottlenecks and policy reforms were jointly financed by the United Nations agencies. Several agencies participated in the 1995 United Nations Inter-Agency Mission on Basic Education and endorsed the recommendations to integrate non-formal education, especially for girls, into the formal education system.

71. The main areas of focus of the joint programmes/activities include institutional reforms, implementation of the SAP, empowerment of women, basic education and support for national preparations for international initiatives. United Nations-system coordination structures consist of regular meetings focused on development issues at the head of agency level, and a set of United Nations inter-agency working groups dealing with CSN themes. A jointly funded United Nations Inter-Agency Support Unit exists to facilitate inter-agency programming and support the resident coordinator in the discharge of his coordination role. One problem has been that while the existing structures have been effective at the strategy level, they have been too broad based to address all operational issues as effectively as one would have hoped.

72. The country programme includes assistance to the SAP intended to improve social service delivery and improve human development indicators. The country programme also focuses on the need for institutional change for successful implementation of social sector programmes. Information on the content of the country programme is shared with the other United Nations organizations through regular inter-agency meetings. However, there is no systematic input by other United Nations agencies in the implementation of the country programme. Joint

monitoring of programmes, except under SAP, is rare. One difficulty at present is that monitoring systems tend to measure the progress of the project according to planned indicators which do not necessarily indicate the impact on poverty. These indicators would need to be developed and refined further to measure the effects on poverty of a given project. The organizations of the system could collaborate in such an exercise.

C. Sri Lanka

73. Rapid economic growth has not been equally accessible to all, particularly the rural population. It is generally accepted that about a third of the Sri Lankan population is "poor". Mass-scale poverty alleviation was given a top priority in Sri Lanka in 1989. Poverty alleviation was mainstreamed and participatory approaches were adopted in the implementation of the development programmes. Since 1989, poverty alleviation has continued to have the highest priority and several additional measures have been taken to reduce, alleviate and cushion those who are affected by poverty. A synopsis of these measures is given in the table below.

ANNUAL COST OF POVERTY-RELATED PROGRAMMES

Programme	No. beneficiaries	Cost (SL Rs million)
1. Food stamps	1.5 million families	3 100
Kerosene	1.2	450
2. Janasaviya		
Round 1	189 000	6 614
Round 2	104 000	3 640
Round 3	98 000	3 430
Round 4	101 000	3 515
Round 5	120 000	4 200
Interest on capital		
Round 1	119 000	357
Round 2	104 000	312
3. School meals	4.3 million	2 000
4. School uniforms	4.3 million	600
5. Infant milk	100 000	125
6. Thriposha	600 000	175
7. Disabled	400 000	150
8. Emergency food	500 000	2 000

(Excludes programme of Janasaviya Trust Fund and IRD programmes)

74. Sri Lanka has had poverty-alleviation programmes in the public sector and in the NGO sector. A third series of interventions has been the numerous integrated rural development (IRD) programmes. While there is evidence that the incidence and severity of poverty have been reduced as a result of the above-mentioned measures, there is still a serious problem of poverty and a need to make the intervention programmes more coordinated and cost-effective.

75. Despite the considerable efforts made so far, certain crucial gaps in poverty-alleviation efforts remain: lack of integration between social mobilization and developmental inputs; insufficient integration between sectoral programmes; inadequate linkages of NGO-based mobilization with government services; almost exclusive focus on the poor to the detriment of holistic village development; and insufficient support to skills training, enterprise development and marketing support.

76. The main coordination effort with regard to poverty alleviation work was expected to emerge from the CSN exercise. This exercise, which commenced in late 1993, reached a stage at which draft papers were presented on four themes, of which poverty alleviation and employment was one. This process was temporarily halted after the change of Government in the middle of 1994. The Government has taken steps to reactivate the process with a view to preparing a CSN for Sri Lanka by the end of 1995.

77. In order also to bring about greater coordination among the various national poverty alleviation programmes and as a first step towards conceptualizing a programme approach in poverty alleviation, UNDP has developed a small-scale project to carry out a comparative study of the existing poverty alleviation programmes. It is also worth noting that both the major UNDP-funded poverty alleviation projects have been carried out in partnership with two multilateral agencies, namely the World Bank and IFAD.

78. Technical assistance to the Janasaviya Trust Fund (JTF). The Janasaviya Trust Fund was created as a pro-poor government institute. It provides financial and some technical support to credit operations, rural works, human resources and institutional development, and to nutrition intervention activities of NGOs and government agencies. The novelty of JTF is that it is designed to use NGOs as intermediaries (partner organizations) to deliver poverty alleviation services. JTF manages four funds: (i) a credit fund; (ii) a human resource development fund; (iii) a rural works fund; and (iv) a nutrition fund. Special emphasis is given to the role and participation of women at the programme level. UNDP provides the technical assistance component of the project which is financed by, among others, the World Bank.

79. The political situation has adversely affected poverty alleviation efforts. The selection and fielding of technical assistance have also been difficult as it has not been easy to find the consultants needed for the envisaged tasks. There are several national poverty alleviation projects which have not been brought under one programme. This is both wasteful and causes unnecessary competition.

80. Second Badulla Integrated Rural Development Project (SBIRDP). A project has been set up to meet the technical assistance needs of SBIRDP, to be

implemented with the assistance of IFAD funding the amount of SDR 9.9 million. Beneficiaries are the landless and micro holders. The project envisages ambitious participatory techniques. Therefore, its progress is slow. As is very common with most poverty alleviation initiatives, finding technical expertise, both national and international, has been difficult. The project also operates in relative isolation and therefore does not benefit fully from useful relevant work being done in other areas. Poverty alleviation, though difficult, must be programmed at the national level. Such programmes should take into account the inherent institutional problems and the long time-frames necessary for development of the necessary programmes, as well as difficulties in the provision of technical assistance.

D. Philippines

81. The Government of the Philippines has set for itself the explicit target of reducing poverty incidence from 40.7 per cent (1991) to 30 per cent in 1998. During the period 1985 to 1991, the incidence of poverty in the Philippines was reduced minimally despite some growth.

82. The United Nations JCGP Subgroup on Harmonization in early 1992 had initiated a pilot effort at concerted action by United Nations agencies (primarily UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and IFAD/WFP) to combat poverty in six countries, including the Philippines. At about the same time the United Nations JCGP initiative was launched, the Presidential Commission to Fight Poverty (PCFP) was created by the President of the Philippines as a high-level oversight body to coordinate all government programmes and projects on poverty. The Commission demonstrated at the outset the need for and the possibility of adopting a unified framework as a basis for drawing up common priorities in the fight against poverty.

83. In support of this process, the United Nations agencies designed a three-pronged agenda: (i) to pilot test a process-oriented approach in a joint collaboration by United Nations agencies; (ii) to help shape the Government's strategy in addressing poverty; and (iii) to act as a catalyst for the establishment of an institutional structure and the mechanisms that would be dedicated to the goal of poverty alleviation. UNDP served as the convenor for the initiative.

84. The joint collaboration reviewed the various efforts at poverty alleviation and assistance to the Government in the preparation of the overall strategy framework for concerted action on poverty which was envisioned to become an integral part of the National Development Plan. The strategy framework or blueprint for poverty alleviation was intended to provide comprehensive poverty assessment/mapping, a policy framework, an overall strategy, action programmes, resource requirements and coordinating monitoring mechanisms. The preparation involved a bottom-up process through extensive consultations with NGOs and grass-roots organizations from all parts of the country.

85. The outcome of the consultations was reflected in the strategic framework document entitled "A Strategy to Fight Poverty" which contained an analysis of the poverty situation, addressing the questions: What is poverty and how is it

perceived by the people? Who are the poor and where are they to be found? What are the causes of poverty? How has the Government attempted to solve the problem? How should the Filipinos as a people solve it? The document proffers five principal strategies which essentially call for sustainable economic growth anchored on appropriate macroeconomic policies and structural adjustment, a focus on the minimum basic needs (or human priorities) and capacity-building for the poor.

86. The next step for PCFP was to operationalize the strategy in specific areas, choosing 10 of the poorest provinces as priorities for pilot testing an integrated approach with the JCGP agencies. Using the bottom-up approach, workshops with the provincial governments in the first five priority provinces were conducted to evolve their own provincial plans of action. Consistent with the reiterative learning approach, the plans for the next five provinces will subsequently be prepared with modifications in the approach based on the experience with the first set.

87. The JCGP agencies are currently programming their activities and inputs in the pilot areas based on the provincial plans of action. Assistance to the Government is currently aimed at the identification of a poverty-focused policy research agenda, the design of a participatory monitoring and evaluation system based on the minimum basic needs, capacity-building at the grass-roots and among the local government units, advocacy work and networking with people's organizations, and direct support to the grass-roots in meeting minimum basic needs.

88. What has so far been the most challenging in the JCGP partnership with the Government in this collaboration is the management of the change process and the policy dialogue. What the emerging strategies call for in operational terms are significant changes in the way programmes of the Government are being managed. A shift to an area-based and target group-focused approach calls for a synchronized programming of programmes and projects. Equally important is the need to devolve the decision-making processes to structures working closest to the grass-roots in order to have a truly participatory or "people empowering" development.

89. It is hoped that the emerging issues could be addressed in the joint Government-JCGP dialogue mechanism. Regular exchange at the technical working group between PCFP and the JCGP agencies has served as a means to involve JCGP in analysing the broad institutional changes necessary to work out the process of change and to overcome bottlenecks in implementing participatory development approaches. It has also enabled JCGP to have a substantive input in the design of process interventions in an advisory capacity. At the policy level, the dialogue and support of the JCGP group serves as moral support and impetus for a continuing advocacy and change within the Government for pro-poor policies and a continuing focus on reversing poverty. The same mechanism has allowed the JCGP agencies to identify operational bottlenecks to harmonization of the agencies' programming of assistance in common areas of interventions.

E. Zimbabwe

90. Following the introduction of an orthodox economic stabilization and adjustment policy package in the early 1990s, the Government of Zimbabwe recognized that adjustment alone was insufficient to put the country on a sustained, poverty-reducing growth path, and that there was an urgent need for poverty-sensitive macroeconomic policies and development programmes to tackle mounting poverty. Building on the experience of the 1991/92 drought and the Social Dimensions of Adjustment policies, the Government requested UNDP technical assistance to design a comprehensive poverty alleviation action plan (PAAP). The PAAP, endorsed by the donor community at a Consultative Group meeting in December 1993, seeks to reverse deteriorating social conditions by broadening the overall scope, coverage and impact of targeted social programmes, giving special emphasis to employment creation and self-reliance activities. Its main components are: (i) implementation of community-based activities in social welfare provision and infrastructure rehabilitation through labour-intensive public works programmes; (ii) implementation of sustainable livelihood initiatives in selected disadvantaged areas, focusing on women, youth and vulnerable groups; (iii) direct support to the informal sector and microenterprise development initiatives; (iv) capacity-building and institutional development to improve the delivery of social safety nets, with special emphasis on food security, education and primary health care.

91. PAAP will strengthen the capacity of government agencies for social policy analysis so as to develop long-term poverty-sensitive socio-economic policies and monitor their impact on poverty. In addition to UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, ADB and the Government of the Netherlands, the Danish, British, Norwegian and Canadian aid agencies have already committed resources for implementation of Zimbabwe's PAAP.

F. Malawi

92. In spite of a remarkable economic performance, Malawi has lagged in terms of social indicators. In an effort to address this "development paradox", a joint Government/United Nations "Situation Analysis of Poverty in Malawi" was produced in 1993 and adopted by the Government as a basis for attacking poverty in the country. The report was the first major attempt to document key poverty factors in Malawi. It revealed that poverty in Malawi is significant and widespread, affecting 60 per cent of rural and 65 per cent of the urban population. The most vulnerable groups include smallholders with less than one hectare of land holding, casual labourers, estate workers and tenants, female-headed households and the urban poor. The key poverty factors were identified as comprising low agricultural productivity, low non-farm income, poor education and health, rapid population growth and weak institutional structures. These underlying poverty factors were found to be closely intertwined. The report, which was endorsed at the December 1993 Consultative Group meeting of donors, also highlighted a number of critical dimensions that cut across all sectors and have important implications for poverty reduction. They include widespread institutional weaknesses in administrative structures and delivery systems, as well as the limited capacity of government agencies and social organizations to support decentralized and participatory development

approaches. Based on these findings, the report recommended that human development strategies in Malawi go beyond price-oriented reforms and focus more on existing structural constraints and institutional weaknesses in the design and implementation of anti-poverty programmes.

93. Following the publication of the report, a national workshop was held in March 1994 to initiate a process of collaborative programming for poverty reduction. The workshop, organized by the Ministry of Finance with the support of UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, is having a major influence on the policy agenda of the newly elected Government. A national steering committee has been created and charged with the responsibility for providing overall guidance and direction to a national anti-poverty programme. The Government has also created the Presidential Council on Poverty Alleviation, which is overseeing the work of 10 sectoral working groups and 24 district-level exercises on poverty reduction. UNDP and other donors, in particular UNICEF and the World Bank, are now discussing the modalities for supporting the Government in the design, implementation and monitoring of the national poverty-reduction programme. A UNDP project will provide assistance to the steering committee for the production and publication of an annual poverty situation report, on the basis of which more precise targeting mechanisms will be developed. The project will also produce disaggregated district-level data for use in development planning and dialogue with communities, and support policy and programme analysis for the design of a national action plan for poverty elimination.

G. Comprehensive poverty reduction programme in Jamaica

94. The Government of Jamaica attaches the highest priority to poverty reduction. The organizations of the system have also emphasized the need to prepare poverty-alleviation programmes. UNDP started, some two years ago, a process of formulating a comprehensive poverty-reduction programme, including the preparation of a poverty map for Jamaica, and bringing together a broad range of United Nations agencies to address related issues in an integrated and coordinated manner. The programme is to be finalized in the light of a policy strategy paper under preparation by the Government.

95. The main problems that have slowed the development of a coordinated poverty eradication programme are the need for capacity-building within the relevant government institutions, and the need to further strengthen field-level coordination of the United Nations organizations in this area.

V. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

96. The brief overview of the policies, strategies and programmes pursued by the United Nations organizations at the country level and the experience of poverty-eradication programmes in the case studies presented show that the need for a multisectoral and multidimensional approach to the eradication of poverty is well recognized by all. It is also clear that a multiplicity of actors have to be involved in a country's poverty-reduction strategy. This makes coordination all the more necessary. The national level of implementation and coordination is of key importance for the overall effectiveness of the struggle

against poverty. The primary responsibility for coordination belongs to the Government. The United Nations system can, however, assist in strengthening the capacity of the Government for such coordination.

97. A number of coordination mechanisms are in place for both horizontal coordination within the system at the country level and vertically between the United Nations agencies and the relevant government ministries and departments. As part of the process of implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199, the resident coordinator system is being strengthened, the programme approach is being increasingly adopted by the United Nations agencies and country strategy notes are being formulated in interested developing countries. Many countries have established interministerial or interdepartmental committees or economic coordination and planning ministries. Similarly, field coordination committees have been set up or, at a minimum, regular inter-agency meetings are convened by the resident coordinators in most countries. Thematic groups, including on poverty eradication, are also being used to coordinate action at the national and local levels.

98. Clearly, any measures designed to strengthen these coordination mechanisms and to promote greater coherence and integration among the various sectoral interventions of the system at the country level will enable the system to address better the challenge of poverty. The policy recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development and the guidance emanating from its consideration by the General Assembly are therefore of direct relevance to the system's work in this area. Likewise, equally relevant will be the outcome of the Assembly's deliberations on the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. But, more specifically, what is needed is to make use of the existing coordinating instruments to formulate, in accordance with the framework articulated by the Summit and in close consultation with the Government, and taking into account the specific needs and situations of each country, clear and coherent poverty-eradication strategies with specific goals and targets which would be integrated into the overall national plans and programmes. The resident coordinator system could clearly be used in assisting in the formulation of such strategies in ensuring coordinated inputs by the United Nations agencies in their implementation, evaluation and monitoring.

99. The steps that need to be taken to organize a well-coordinated attack on poverty are also well understood. It is vitally important that the Government demonstrate a firm commitment, at the highest political level, to the goal of poverty eradication and be willing and able to mobilize and allocate the required domestic financial and human resources for that purpose. Equally vital is the will and the capacity of the Government to take the lead in organizing a coordinated response to the challenge of poverty. The strategy to be pursued has to be based on growth with equity, full participation of all actors in development, including the civil society, non-governmental and community-based organizations and the poor themselves, and should involve a decentralized approach in which decisions and resources allocations can be made at the local level taking into account the specific conditions and needs of the target groups or areas.

100. The United Nations agencies can and must play an advocacy role, provide financial and technical assistance and help develop coherent and complementary poverty-eradication programmes. To this end, it is essential that United Nations agencies work together to help build the capacity of the Government to carry out its leadership and coordinating responsibilities. United Nations agencies must also make determined efforts to simplify, rationalize and harmonize their programming methods and administrative and financial rules and procedures and, as far as possible, to harmonize their programming cycles, so that the impact of the limited resources, technical assistance and other inputs provided by them can be optimized.

101. The effort at coordination should not be confined to the level of broad policy or strategy formulation but should aim at achieving greater compatibility and closer integration of programming approaches and project formulation by such methods as developing common definitions of poverty, working together on poverty indicators, common data collection, identification of target groups and areas and shared assessment, evaluation and monitoring of results and impact. Wherever possible and feasible, joint programming could be pursued.

102. It must be recognized, however, that so long as there are line ministries on the one hand and United Nations agencies with a sector-specific mandate on the other, there is a great potential for fragmentation in decision-making, as United Nations system-Government dialogue tends to become compartmentalized and handled on a one-to-one basis by each specialized agency with the concerned ministry. This need not be so, but the risk is there and fragmentation has often tended to diffuse efforts and dilute the overall impact. As individual United Nations agencies start to address their own mandates from a broader perspective, instead of in a narrow, sector-specific way, and as coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences is developed at the country level, there is a great opportunity and a better likelihood that fragmentation will decrease. But there is still a long way to go. The strengthening of the role of the Resident Coordinator and the adoption of the programme approach can greatly enhance coordination and integration of United Nations system (and donor) inputs by placing emphasis on intersectoral linkages and multi-institutional actions in support of country priorities.

103. A key question in this regard is the relationship between the United Nations, its funds and programmes and the specialized agencies on the one hand, and the Bretton Woods institutions on the other. If economic and social policy making remain disjointed, coordination - both policy and operational - will be difficult no matter how much the United Nations-system agencies come together under a common programming framework. There needs to be close cooperation between the Bretton Woods institutions and the rest of the system. An integrated poverty agenda can be moved forward if the Bretton Woods institutions and the rest of the system can not only develop common approaches, definitions, poverty-assessment indicators and data collection but can also work towards greater complementarity and integration between economic and social policies, including through their policy framework papers (PFP) and the CSN.

104. The critical question of resources in meeting the challenge of poverty eradication cannot, however, be overemphasized. Even the best formulated strategies and well-coordinated programmes have to be backed up with the

required resources for them to be implemented effectively. Determined efforts need to be made, at the national and international levels, for the mobilization and reallocation of resources towards the goal of poverty eradication. In this regard, the commitments and goals of major international conferences, in particular the World Summit for Social Development, should be fully adhered to and implemented by all countries.

Notes

1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992 (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. I and Vol. I/Corr.1, Vol. II, Vol. III and Vol. III/Corr.1)) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: Resolutions Adopted by the Conference, resolution 1, annex I, principle 5.

2/ Ibid., annex II, para. 3.4 and following.

3/ Ibid., annex II, para. 3.5.

4/ Ibid., annex I, principle 5.

5/ Ibid., annex II, para. 3.10 (c).

6/ Ibid., annex II, para. 3.10 (e).

7/ Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, (Cairo, 5-13 September 1994) (A/CONF.171/13 and Add.1), resolution I, annex, chap. III, para. 3.14.

8/ Ibid., chap. II, principle 7.

9/ Ibid., chap. II, principle 3.

10/ Ibid., chap. II, principle 2.

11/ Ibid., chap. III, para. 3.22.

12/ Ibid., chap. XIII, para. 13.23.

13/ See A/CONF.177/L.1, para. 46.

14/ Ibid., Strategic objective A.1, para. 60.

15/ Report of the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995) (A/CONF.166/9), resolution I, annex I, para. 29, commitment 10.

16/ The Work of the United Nations System in Poverty Alleviation: report of the CCPOQ Working Group on Poverty (ACC/1995/POQ/CRP.19, annex).

17/ Ibid.